



Champions Career Centre

"Connecting Employers and People with Disabilities"

Newsletter of Champions

Issue No. 10

Fall 2004

Connecting Employers with People who are "Ready, Willing & Able" to Work!

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Yes, you may be thinking this is a great opportunity for both an employer, and the people who have the education, skills, direct work experience and ability to be a productive member of any working environment or society.

However, the matter of accommodation is not as easy as it may appear and may be one of the biggest barriers to employment for persons with disabilities in the City of Calgary.

The following story is one individual's experience as a job seeker in Calgary who is dealing with a variety of barriers in meeting his employment goal:

People with Great Hearts and Abilities

In the real world, people with disabilities have a lot to tell about their day-to-day activities on achieving goals. A person may have one physical disability and hundreds of abilities. But some people, without disabilities, do not fully consider the barriers to employment and are not aware that barriers are easy to overcome.

A person with a disability needs a strong heart that enables him or her to live successfully and have the courage and ability to overcome barriers to employment with the resources that are available, not only for the job seeker, but also the employers in Calgary, while still living a proactive life.

As a person who has a low vision condition, after having 20/20 vision for 28 years, I also have many other problems which are not within my control. I have been trying to enter into the work force in Calgary for more than six months within the profession of accounting in which I have over six years of experience and

qualifications. I have been receiving many interviews, but when I disclose my vision condition in the final interview, they simply hire someone else and provide me with a general reason for not hiring me.

I do have the necessary software and equipment that allows me to work as a regular productive member of any accounting team. When I apply with temporary placement agencies that seem to have a large number of job postings that continue to be advertised week after week and my skills and experience fit, they do not allow me to do the assessment. In my view, this is because they do not want to install my adaptive software on their computer system to allow me to read small print and overcome my barrier.

As an immigrant to Canada, I strongly believe a multicultural country like this should have an excellent diversified approach to the job market and the other social events. However it is not always as it appears. We are lucky to have organizations such as Champions Career Centre (CCC) to help us help ourselves to overcome such barriers, which are not in our control.

If we can do something to bring awareness about the hundreds of abilities of the skilled job seekers who deal with barriers to employment, rather than the one disability, the employers and other people will understand what a person with a "Disabled" label has the ability and capacity to accomplish.

Duminda Nayakarantna – Accountant

My role as a Job Developer with Champions is multifaceted. This role is not just limited to career counselling and direct job placement, but also includes awareness of how, in most employment situations, accommodation for employees

who deal with a variety of disabilities is as simple as when an employer makes any new staff member comfortable within their new position. Items such as a different chair, proper work desk, larger computer monitor, ergonomic keyboard, and a rubber mat on which to stand are just some of the ways to overcome identified barriers to employment.

As we are all aware, everyone must be a productive member of the team and must contribute to the bottom line of the organization. As an employer, you are not left alone to worry about how to approach the accommodation issue. Employers in Calgary are very fortunate that Alberta Human Resources & Employment (AHRE) has an excellent program called Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) that supports the potential employer with the costs relating to overcoming the identified barriers to an employment position. Champions, along with the guidance of the employer and the new employee, assesses the barriers that will be faced in the work environment and processes the DRES applications, reducing any non-productive time.

I too can relate to the DRES process. As a person who deals with a disability and faces barriers to employment, I have accessed DRES to support me in my productive employment role. I would like to ask you, as employers, why you would not access this hidden talent pool of skilled "Ready, Willing and Able" individuals, who are productive and who will contribute in maximizing your bottom line?

Seasons Greetings Calgary!

Kelly J. Callison Nadeau

Job Developer

www.championscareercentre.org



President's Message



Continuity and Change

The Articles of Association for Champions Career Centre Ltd. stipulate that at every Annual Meeting all existing Directors must retire from office and that an election be held for Directors

who will serve until the next Annual Meeting. In keeping with this requirement, an election for Directors was held at the Annual Meeting held June 24th. Re-elected from the previous Board were Shirley McBride, Gerrit Groeneweg, Gregory Humprey, Karen McGhee, and Ned Shillington. Newly elected Directors were Betty-Ann Blackwell, Lorraine Goobie, and Joe Miller. Unfortunately, Lorraine Goobie subsequently considered that changing and increasing demands within the scope of her own employment situation would likely result in her being unable to fulfill, to her standards, the demands of her volunteer responsibilities as a Director at Champions. As a result, the Board of Directors regretfully accepted her resignation in September. Her anticipated role on the Board as a human resources specialist was subsequently filled through the appointment of Bob MacIntyre. With this complement of 8 individuals spanning a diverse set of perspectives, skill sets and experience, the Board is well positioned to tackle the next important and essential steps of this evolving organization. As the organization matures, so changes the issues that the Board must now attend to. Some of the evolving issues include a formalization of roles and responsibilities at the governance and operational levels, increasing focus on predictable processes and organizational stability, and an increasing concern with

outcomes, to name a few. These changing concerns are a normal evolutionary process of all "new" organizations, and are ones that the Board must, and is now eager, to address.

A Hand Up and a Helping Hand

At the time this newsletter contribution is being written, the province is in the midst of a vigorous discussion and review of its Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program. While the issues are too complex to provide a simple opinion here, it does need to be said that while Champions Career Centre is in the business of helping individuals with disabilities achieve their career aspirations, it is also clear that those aspirations and how they can be realized vary widely from person to person, and even within the same person from time to time depending upon the "cycle" or evolution of their condition and circumstance. These aspirations are also significantly determined by an employment community and culture that recognizes and can accommodate that variability for mutual benefit. In this regard, this province as a whole needs to recognize and engage the talents and assets that individuals with disabilities can provide to the economic well being of the province and its businesses. It must also recognize that for those who disabilities either prevent or limit their productive contributions, a truly wealthy culture is one that not only cares about but cares for those cannot generate sufficient capital (in any of its forms) to provide for themselves. As such, this province must ensure that the programs for its persons with disabilities are truly facilitating, flexible, and ensure an adequate quality of life for everyone.

Gerrit Groeneweg, Ph.D., C. Psych.

Government Commitment

The Champions Career Centre project is made possible by funding through **Alberta Human Resources and Employment and the Government of Canada**. Recognizing the need for a centralized 'job bank' for individuals with disabilities, Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) awarded Champions with a two-year contract to develop and provide employment services for Albertans with disabilities. This funding enabled Champions to quickly establish an array of employment, training and placement services for its clients. AHRE addresses workplace issues including training, health and safety, and employment support and services. For information about AHRE, visit the web site at www.gov.ab.ca/hre.

Corporate Commitment

TransAlta is among Canada's largest non-regulated power generation and wholesale marketing companies, with approximately 10,000 megawatts of capacity in operation, under construction or in development. The Company has coal-fired, gas-fired, hydro and renewable generation assets in Canada, the U.S., Mexico and Australia. TransAlta's focus is to efficiently operate their assets in order to provide their wholesale customers with a reliable, low-cost source of power.

RBC Royal Bank is one of Canada's premier financial services institutions serving over 12 million individuals and business customers worldwide. With assets of \$362 billion, the organization employs 57,500 full time employees. The company values diversity in the workplace and is committed to employment equity. About 30 percent of all employees work in some form of flexible work arrangement, the highest proportion of any company in Canada. For more information about RBC Royal Bank and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.rbc.com.

TransCanada Pipelines Limited is a leading North American energy company, focused on natural gas transmission and power services. Its network of about 38,000 kilometres (23,600 miles) of pipeline transports the majority of western Canada's natural gas production to the fastest growing markets in Canada and the United States. Headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, TransCanada owns, controls, or has under construction about 2,550 megawatts of power - enough to meet the needs of more than two million average households. For more information about TransCanada and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.transcanada.com

Treasurer's Report

As a new Board member and Treasurer of Champions Career Centre, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to the Champions community. I am a Certified Management Accountant and a Director of Financial Operations for the Vision Quest Wind Generation business of TransAlta Corporation. I have over 15 years of finance and accounting experience in Calgary. I would like to add that I consider it a privilege to serve Champions and help to continue the excellent work to date.

As Treasurer, my role is to ensure the financial integrity of the organization is maintained and even enhanced where necessary through the use of internal controls and monthly reviews with the Executive Director of Champions. Since coming to the

agency, I can say that I am very pleased with the high degree of governance in ensuring the viability and financial integrity of the organization. Your Executive Director holds governance as a high priority in the organization.

From a financial standpoint, the organization continues to deliver against the AHRE contract while controlling costs. There are sufficient levels of cash reserves to ensure the agency's ability to deliver services to the community and to deliver services which are outside of the AHRE contract.

**Yours truly,
Joseph Miller**



From the Desk of the Executive Director



This report represents the ongoing obligation to inform the larger community of significant operational matters since the publication of the Summer Newsletter.

Staffing highlights during this period included:

*A full 2000-2004 (inclusive) personnel review covering the staffing profile was completed revealing the long-term implications of placement decisions which impacted the service capacity of the agency. Twelve disabled staff members were hired in support of our ethical commitment to disability employment.

*Job Developer Kelly Nadeau played a major role in chairing the 2004 organizing committee for the International Day of Disabled Persons held at the Calgary City Hall 12/03/04.

*Two members of the Contract Management Team, Moon and Trono, attended training session held on (FOIP) Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act 11/05/04 in order to ensure that client file protection policies are up-to-date and fully implemented.

*The Intake Coordinator position is now staffed by Lynn Mackay with an extensive background in the field. She is the professional most involved with clients at the earliest stages (Orientation and Intake Interview) of entry into our program.

*Mr. Chris Budd joined the CCC staff as a full time Client Services Coordinator on 11/17/04, bringing an outstanding portfolio of experiences following a lengthy and distinguished career in the British military, designing and implementing a comprehensive training program which impacted the career skills of over 2500 personnel. Upon leaving the military he expanded his skills as a highly-motivated multi-skilled manager, completing the U of Calgary 2004 Certificate in Conflict Resolution and the 2003 Human Resource Management Certificate.

*To enhance Job Development services, Mr. Jim McDonagh, presently senior staff with élan Personnel, will join the CCC staff as a Job Developer effective 12/13/04. Jim has an extensive background of management and sales experience, human resources recruitment and training, business operations, and corporate administration. Kent Wood, Labour Market Manager, has moved to Nelson with the BC Worker's Compensation Board.

Dr. Debra Russell (U of Alberta Peikoff Chair of Deafness Studies and expert on the Alberta deaf community) met to plan improved services to this community. The Calgary interpreter community has been radically affected as the result of better financial opportunities in the education sectors, leading to a shortage of certified interpreter personnel to serve CCC clients. Management staff is developing support structures using free-lance interpreters.

*Dr. Kelly Williams, Management Faculty member (Calgary Campus, University of Lethbridge) delivered an "Accommodation in the Workplace" Seminar to CCC staff on 09/23/04 discussing social and personality factors which affect the success of disabled individuals in the workplace. CCC will be sponsoring her city-wide seminar 02/09/05 to be widely advertised.

Board related developments included:

*The leadership of Treasurer Joe Miller continues to improve the agency's financial monitoring and reporting processes. A team approach using the skills of the Treasurer/Accountant/ED has refined monthly Board financial reporting and improved cost containment measure and the development of effective program enhancements utilizing corporate donations.

*Given the extensive financial and developmental investment made by TransAlta, our lead corporate donor in 2000-2003, a special meeting was held on 11/03/04 to apprise senior representatives of that corporation of the activities made possible by this support.

*Given the election of four new Board members at the AGM in June, we instituted an orientation process to update them with client management, staff responsibilities, and the AHRE contractual obligations undertaken.

AHRE Contract related developments included:

*Revised legal contracts have been finalized in early December for the Service Providers involved in delivering 1:1 and Workshop services. Original contracts were developed when CPA(A) was leading the agency. Lawyer Don Heighington (Lynass, Ferguson and Shctor) has worked in collaboration with this office to complete the new legal draft. A meeting with the Service Provider community will be called in early January 2005 to obtain opinion prior to final draft preparation.

*A series of meetings were held with senior AHRE executive staff members at three Calgary primary offices clarified government staff opinion toward CCC activities to determine if improvements were made over time and to address perceived ongoing problem. To illustrate, a 10/21/04 meeting with senior staff of Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped and Long Term Support Programs led to improved communication and direct service processes between our agencies.

*Jim McLaughlin, AHRE/CCC Contract Manager, on 09/22/04, conducted the normal On-Site Monitor process to evaluate contractual obligations to the Provincial Government. His report was tendered 11/18/04 and dealt with areas of success to date as well as considerations to be developed prior to the next evaluation date.

Finally, the Client Advisory Committee (Barry Lindemann, Glenn Murphy, and Maureen Walls) have been conducting informal sessions providing direct feedback from members of the disability community about CCC and community services in Calgary. Recently they met with AHRE representatives Mary Macdonald and Jim McLaughlin to discuss Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) processes and overall contractual obligations. (DRES is a critical AHRE support system that provides employment enhancing technical supports once clients achieve employment.) Lindemann was featured in the recent issue of Arch, the U of Calgary Alumni magazine, with his story "A tragedy with a silver lining" describing his 1994 quadriplegia incident and his many accomplishments since.

Nexen Inc. (formerly Canadian Occidental Petroleum Ltd.) is a global energy and chemicals company with production in Canada, the United States, Yemen, Nigeria and Latin America. Nexen conducts its business in an honest, ethical manner and adheres to the highest standards of integrity when dealing with stakeholders and the communities where they operate. Headquartered in Calgary, Nexen employs 2,000 people in its operations around the world. Nexen is an employer of choice through its diverse business unit structure, commitment to the use of leading edge technology, small company environment and global career opportunities. For more information about Nexen Inc. and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.nexeninc.com.

Shell Canada Limited is one of the largest integrated petroleum companies in Canada. The company is a major producer of natural gas, natural gas liquids and bitumen, and the country's largest producer of sulfur. Shell Canada is also a leading manufacturer, distributor, and marketer of refined petroleum products. Shell Canada provides a select number of scholarships for Canadian students with disabilities. For more information about Shell Canada and employment opportunities, visit their web site at www.shell.ca.

BP Canada Energy is one of Canada's top producers of natural gas and derivatives, in addition to being Canada's largest sulfur producer. BP is rated as the number one oil company in terms of environmental performance. For more information about BP Canada and career opportunities visit their web site at www.bp.com.

Foundation Commitment

The Kahanoff Foundation is a private Canadian foundation active in Canada and Israel. The foundation was established in 1979 from the estate of Sydney Kahanoff, a Calgary oilman. Today its assets are in excess of \$100 million, making it one of the largest foundations in Canada. Located in Calgary, the foundation funds traditional and innovative charitable programs in the areas of health, education, culture, social services, philanthropy, community development and research. For more information about The Kahanoff Foundation, visit their web site at www.kahanoff.com.

Please note that given that several statutory holidays fall on weekends this year, CCC office closure days will correspond with AHRE policy. We shall be closed 2004 December 24, 27, 28 and 2005 January 3.

Robert Gall, Ph.D., C. Psych.

My New Attitude

Five years ago I was in a debilitating vehicle accident. Though I was not visibly disabled I was unable to perform the computer tasks required to maintain my employment. My main injury was in my neck and after two years of physiotherapy, acupuncture, massage, MRI's, Catscans, (you name it I tried it!) I came to the realization I was not going to return to my career. The harder I tried the more depressed I became.

Soon the depression became a major part of my disability. Blah Blah Blah Blah Poor me! Poor me! Eventually I figured it out. No one was ever going to help me unless I helped myself.

Enter Champions Career Centre.

Some how, some way, I was directed to the Centre through Human Resources Canada. I came, as we all do, with an attitude that there was no help for me, I had already run through every resource available to no avail.

WRONG!

The people at Champions put me through some amazing workshops, introduced me to some great people and taught me, by showing me, and

encouraging me, that there were options. From my intake appointment, to the people who facilitated and instructed the programs, all had one thing in common. Other than the fact they were all very capable of their jobs, they all had these amazingly positive attitudes. Their outlook on the future, my future, was bright and optimistic. Something someone in the depths of depression needed to hear. It was definitely the push I needed to get off my sorry butt and move forward.

So I did.

With the help of Carrie Doupe and Kelly Yorston, I was given aptitude testing and occupational therapy, job search and interview workshops, which I thought I didn't need.

WRONG AGAIN!

Eventually Carrie found a job advertisement in my field, not my position, but I figured "Why not?" I got the job. Mainly due to my "new" attitude.

Today I am in the process of starting my own business, in my field, but on my terms. I am in a mentorship program at M.C.C. Employment Development; a

program I was directed to through Champions. Again I am meeting interesting and intelligent people who as well have one thing in common; a positive attitude.

I am, and will be, forever indebted to the people at Champions who were such an influence in a huge change in my life. I regret that Human Resources Canada cannot offer these kinds of programs to everyone who is searching for answers to their career goals. The difference it has made in my life is immeasurable. Not only has it changed my mental attitude, but has changed my physical attitude as well. In overcoming some of my hurdles, I realized that if I wasn't healthy physically, my mental state of being wasn't going to change. Today I am proud to say that at 45 years of age I have never been healthier. (And I was a "jock" most of my life.) Through proper nutrition and lots of exercise, I have become a lean, mean, once again working machine.

Thanks to those at Champions who are so inspirational and encouraging!!

Corrie Neyrinck (former disabled person)

Mark Your Calendars for February 9, 2005 at 3:00 pm. Venue to be announced



Presenting: Dr. Kelly Williams, University of Lethbridge

Workplace disability is an issue of substantial concern to employers, employees, unions, and public policy makers. While a great deal of research on the topic has occurred across a wide array of disciplines, much of the work has been conducted without the benefit of a guiding theoretical framework. Where theory has been developed, it has focused primarily on the psychological processes of disabled employees and assumes the employee is capable of performing the tasks assigned.

Dr. Williams's presentation will explore the results of her field investi-

gation which was conducted to identify other factors that might impact reintegration and to develop a model that was more reflective of workplace realities. The research question Dr. Williams attempted to answer was: what are the key variables impacting the process of workplace reintegration for disabled employees?

Five categories of factors emerged as significant contributors to the ease or difficulty of accommodations: 1) the employment and disability history of the employee, 2) the nature of the disability (particularly chronicity, visibility, and legitimacy), 3) the behaviours and attitudes of the returning employee, 4) employer factors such as degree of accommodation effort,

inclusion of the disabled employee, and sophistication of reintegration procedures, as well as 5) outside agent factors (e.g. the relationship between the employer and the employee's physician).

Dr. Williams then relies on social capital theory to explain many of her observations. Social capital is the goodwill available to individuals or groups at work. The research suggests that disability can decrease an employee's credibility with peers and managers, impacts the ability to repay favours, and sometimes prompts behaviours that violate workplace norms, which can ultimately make accommodation more difficult.